



Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Sheyla Rivera, and I am a resident of Hartford, a part-time student of Quinnipiac University, a full-time accountant and a mom of a three year-old. I am an immigrant who has lived in Connecticut since 2010. I am a member of the Fight Back Committee of Make the Road CT.

I stand in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. If Connecticut wants to ensure a future of healthy families, we must care for all individuals including immigrants up to age 26, and beyond.

I am from Peru and came to this country when I was 15 years old. My parents did everything for me and my sister to get an education in this country and I can happily say that seeing how me and my sister graduated from a University were the happiest days of their lives. However, this was not easy, especially when they are sick.

I am sure COVID-19 has hit every single family but I would never forget the month of November 2020 and how I thought that my parents would not make it to the next day. When my parents tested positive for COVID, of course, everyone in the house including my sister, my husband and my son took the adequate precautions in not trying to spread it between us but it was too late. By the next week, the six of us got COVID and we all had to stay in our rooms for weeks. We would make turns in the living room area and call each other every night to see how we were doing. Thankfully, my sister, husband and son were feeling better after a few days but my parents kept worsening by the passing of each single day. I saw my dad lost 30 pounds in less than a week and my mom lost about 20 pounds. They could not get up and walk to the bathroom without help because they were too weak to do that. They could not talk, they could barely breath and they could barely eat. We wanted to take them to the hospitals every night but they did not have insurance and at that time, we were not informed very well about access for undocumented in hospitals. We just kept thinking that if we go, we will get a high bill that it would be impossible for us to pay because we didn't have insurance.

This was a very traumatizing moment that I do not think I would be able to forget. This is why I am here today to support this bill because we all need access to insurance. A person should not be afraid to go to the hospital to see what is going on with their body and this bill will definitely change people's lives.

I support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,
Sheyla Rivera